All of them made their own axes, knobkerries and catapults for hunting. Some were interested in music and made shepherds' pipes, or one-stringed lyres, or hand pianos of metal strips affixed to a wooden base. They composed their own songs and airs for these instruments. Others showed ingenuity in making elaborate models of lorries and aeroplanes, or in carving heads of animals. Others liked to weave fibre into the wide-brimmed hats some herd-boys wore.

More significant still for their future social relationships, they began now to choose their own intimate friend and to form the friendship pacts which were characteristic of Ngoni society, and regarded by adults as important in the child's development. In the friendship pacts, especially those between boys, there was no implied or manifest restraint. They could have 'joking relations', and hence say outrageous things to each other. They could quarrel and make it up, and defy each other's wishes and decisions, without a final breach. The relationship between friends often lasted into later adult life, and was probably all the stronger for the occasional lapses and outbursts, and by the fact that in the daily companionship of friends the burden of observing 'respect' did not oppress them.

The boys' dormitory

The hut known as the boys' dormitory and the whole system of living which it represented was a traditional feature of Ngoni village life. In their culture it had three main purposes. Formerly, when as they said 'War was our school', it was the place where boys slept and lived together, and where they learned to defend themselves and to obey authority. It was in a sense the preparatory school for the regiment, and the herding of cattle was the basis of the curriculum. Once a boy went to sleep in a dormitory he never left it until he married, unless he was seriously ill. In the days of warfare, he learned in the dormitory and out herding the cattle, a knowledge of the bush and its wild life and of his fellows, and

575 182 342 the qualities required in self-defence and in mutual aid which he would need when, at the age of eighteen or so, he was called up into the new regiment formed by the Paramount. Dormitory life was therefore rooted in the Ngoni past and though its original purpose and outcome had disappeared with the suppression of tribal wars, it was still part of the organization for herding cattle and was regarded as a necessary training ground for young manhood. In very large villages there was more than one dormitory, each placed in a section of the village surrounding a cattle kraal. Boys belonged to the dormitory of that section where their parents' household was situated. There were occasional attempts sponsored by certain missions to set up a separate dormitory for boys who were baptized Christians or in an inquirers' class. This kind of separation was greatly disliked by the Ngoni on the grounds that they did not want anything to divide their people. They regarded dormitory life as an important co-ordinating factor in their young peoples' development, and they did not want the tradition to be spoiled. They therefore opposed any sectionalizing of the dormitory system except on the geographical lines already mentioned, which allowed for the full operation of the two remaining purposes of the dormitory in Ngoni culture.

575 562 861 The first of these purposes was to remove boys, once they had their second teeth, from the influence of the women. Ngoni men were outspoken in condemning the effects of all women's influence on boys. They made a slight exception in favour of the mothers and grandmothers of high-ranking Ngoni clans. Non-Ngoni women they always suspected, and often rightly, of introducing youths and girls to ideas and practices which were contrary to Ngoni custom, particularly in connexion with sex and magic. It was partly a belief that dormitory life would 'Ngoni-ize' the boys and counteract non-Ngoni influences from whatever source that made them so unyielding about boys leaving the women's supervision at what they considered a crucial stage.

VILLAGE LIFE FOR OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

There was no doubt that this abrupt transition, like the sudden weaning was a shock for many boys between six-and-a-half and seven-and-a-half. From having been impudent, well-fed, self-confident and spoiled youngsters among the women many of them quickly became skinny, scruffy, subdued and with a hunted expression. The subdued and hunted looks passed off as they adjusted themselves to their new environment and there were boys, generally those exceptionally well grown and physically strong, who showed no apparent signs of shock. They all, however, showed the effects of irregular and inadequate feeding. The younger boys were chronically hungry and their hair and skin and bony knees and ribs were eloquent of calory, protein and vitamin shortages.

The other main purpose of dormitory life in Ngoni culture was to mix up all the boys in the village and let the common life together teach them how to get on with their age-mates and knuckle under to their superiors in age. Age and strength were the only criteria for authority. Older brothers might try to protect and intercede for younger brothers but it was not encouraged. All the young ones had to take their chance equally, without regard for their family name or their father's position.

The dormitory was primarily a sleeping-place, but through the group of boys who slept there the herding of cattle was organized and the off-duty amusements and occupations of the older boys were planned. The young ones had to 'fag' for the rest, fetching wood and water, keeping fires going, sweeping the hut, taking messages, huddling in a corner at night when the oldest boys brought girls in, and submitting to beatings both as a warning and as a punishment. They were usually beaten once or twice soon after their arrival and then threatened with much worse if they ever divulged what went on in the dormitory. It was not however a torture house, far from it, and the boys boasted of belonging to 'our dormitory' and were proud of having their own hidden life

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

575 there. It was a rough Spartan existence, where individual feelings and preferences had little scope, and where the younger ones were kept busy from dawn to dusk. Ngoni elders believed and indeed it was a key concept in their [858] culture, that boys should be kept busy all the time and made [515] to wash in cold water. Bathing in the cold streams of the Ngoni highlands was part of dormitory life. No Edwardian father talked more piously and convincingly about the merits of cold baths than Ngoni parents did.

575 The boys living in the dormitory continued to be fed from 264 their mother's household. The older boys had their food brought by a child to the kraal gate as was done for their fathers. The younger ones sometimes fetched their own and took it to the kraal gate where they sat on the extreme edge of the men's group. More often they were given what was left over from their fathers' and older brothers' servings. [146] This procedure accounted for the inadequate amounts eaten [272] by the younger boys, though they drank some milk when [262] milking the herds and out at the grazing grounds they made curds and caught birds and baked them in clay. Sometimes the desperation of hunger drove them to steal maize cobs or ground nuts from their mother's granary to roast in the [685] ashes of their fire. This kind of stealing was condemned as very wrong by Ngoni standards, and sometimes older boys, in order to show their authority, forced the young ones to steal in this way on their behalf.

575 What effect did dormitory life produce on the boys? The [867] Ngoni parents, the fathers that is, expected it to produce [155] toughness, leadership, responsibility and respect for authority. On the whole it was successful. The Spartan life ensured toughness, the herding of cattle demanded responsibility and leadership, and the smooth running of dormitory society was based on respect for authority and obedience to it. From time to time the younger boys ganged up together to protect themselves from over-exploitation, and learned in these efforts at resistance the value of joint action. There was con-

siderable latent, and at times overt, antagonism from the younger towards the older group. This was to some extent mitigated by the dominant interest as well as occupation in cattle-herding. The head herd-boys were people of importance, called in for consultations with the adults who were cattle-owners. They assisted at the killing of beasts and went with them to market when beasts were sold. These older boys, despite their dominance, were heroes to the younger ones, and basked in an aura of hero-worship. They took good care to build up their claims to be thought of as 'big ones', with proven feats of strength, vaunted knowledge about cattle, skill in leading dances, and reputations as lady-killers.

The younger boys found some outlet for their aggressive impulses in the stick fighting, which was a recognized sport. They fought with 'rods', like single-sticks, and became adept at attack and defence. It was alleged that in the old days there was no redress for broken heads or bruises. As the elders said: 'They were learning to fight when young. There was no man ignorant of this learning. This school for fighting made strength in the body.' The clash of sticks could be heard out on the grazing grounds by day or in the evening on the edge of the village when the cattle were safely in the kraal. Skill in stick-fighting was one of the ways in which leadership among the younger boys was acknowledged. It was a kind of knock-out championship, hotly contested, until everyone agreed: 'That one—he has excelled.' Boys going to school took their sticks and knobkerries with them in case they were challenged on the path, but they were careful to hide them in the bushes just before arriving at the school.

Boys' life in the village

When the boys went to live in the dormitory they did not only escape from the women's world into a boys' circle. They entered the fringe of the men's world and provided they conducted themselves with propriety they could sit on the edge of the men's group at the kraal gate and listen to talk about men's affairs.

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi

N 614 563

Of the Mandawire Tribe.

(1) *Chimbale* (Chimbalanga).

Of the Sukuma Tribe.

(1) *Nthoro*, meaning the frame put over an antheap. Tabu: termites (Kamkwamba, Yekoniya). (2) *Chisi* (Kampimbi, Funsani). (3) *Mphopo* (Lichapa). (4) *Chipeta* (Chinyanya). (5) *Chinsa* (Njumbula). (6) *Ng'ombe* (Manyusa). (7) *Chilu* (Dumbo). (8) *Liwinda* (Kalinda). (9) *Mwanje* (Mgubo).

Of the Tonga Tribe. (A tribe allied to the Atumbuka living in the North of Nyasaland, not to be confused with the Aba-thonga south of the Zambezi).

(1) *Manda*. (2) *Nkhota*.

M 575 535 [825] [764] [881] N [575] [177]

3. *Secret Societies: the Vinyau.*

The word *vinyau* (*sing. chinyau*) signifies "representations of animals." It serves also as the name of a dance in which large figures of grass and wicker, masks and other disguises play the principal part. This dance has a wide range and has long been performed by the Achewa in connexion with funerals. Latterly it has been introduced into initiation ceremonies as well. It is not danced by the Ngoni or Tumbuka tribes to the north; but the Dowa Angoni, who have not preserved their own nationality, tribal forms and customs to any great extent, have adopted it generally for funerals and sometimes for initiations. The most prevalent explanation of its origin is that when God made the country and its people He also instituted the *vinyau*. Consequently, the life of the people is bound up with it, and its secrets must be guarded zealously, initiates being warned that if they disclose them, not only will they themselves perish, but also their fathers and mothers and all their relations with them.

M [114] [775]

In 1907 Captain R. S. Rattray referred to this dance in his "Folk Lore Stories and Songs in Chinyanja," pp. 178 and 179, and expressed the opinion that it was undoubtedly in some way connected with totemism, the grass animals being reincarnations of the dead. He observed that the secrets were scrupulously kept, and that natives accustomed to speak freely on their other customs refused absolutely to discuss the *vinyau*. During the last twenty years of contact with European civilisation, its devotees have greatly increased in number; the dance itself M [178] has diverged to some extent from its original purpose and degenerated into a mere amusement; and the educated native of to-day does not believe so readily in the mysterious properties of a grass animal, and is therefore comparatively *ready* to impart his knowledge on the subject.[1]

M [171]

[1] Dr. Shannon makes a brief reference to the *vinyau*, and in Harvard African Studies III, loc. cit., p. 253, he describes one of the corresponding Yao *nyago* figures, viz., the *nandondo*, which is a "representation of an animal made of bark on a framework covered with mud and painted with flour in spiral markings, hence the name (*ndondo* is part of a spiral shell from the Zambezi coast much prized by natives as an ornament)." In the following pages he gives a list of the other *nyago* figures, nearly all of which represent various animals, and states that they are used at the *lupanda* (initiation of boys) for instructional purposes, the Wayao denying any totemic origin. The Yao word *nyago* is, of course, the same as the Chewa *vinyau*.